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PEEL WEEKLY NEWS

Week of Dec. 12, 2018

MISSISSAUGA | BRAMPTON | CALEDON

Students and staff remember slain Clarkson teen

by **Alex Gregory**

Riley Driver-Martin, as seen in an undated file photo posted by family members on an online fundraising page. Driver-Martin, who was found Friday near his home on Truscott Drive, is the region's 25th homicide victim of 2018. (File Photo)

Hundreds of residents, students and advocates packed Clarkson Community Centre Monday evening to remember the life of Riley Driver-Martin, the 14 year-old who was found dead last Friday in a laneway near Southdown Road and Truscott Drive.

Driver-Martin, a student at Clarkson Secondary School, was championed by friends and staff as a helpful, kind teen who looked out for his friends and aspired to become a boxer.

"All that knew Riley said he was a charming and polite young man with a heart of gold," said family friend Tierra Santa, in an online post made over the weekend. "His presence is greatly missed at the family table."

Driver-Martin was found early Friday morning by a passing resident, after reportedly leaving his home on Truscott Drive late the prior evening.

Police subsequently located 20 year-old Nicholas Mahabir, who was charged with second-degree murder Saturday. His brother, Mark Mahabir, turned himself in to police later that day.

Driver-Martin is the 25th homicide case in Peel Region this year.

His father, C.J. Marin, said that he hoped justice would be served, and said he hoped his son wouldn't be forgotten.

"At the end of the day, I go home and I have no more boy," he told the crowd.

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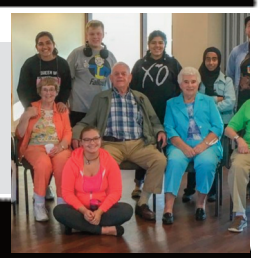

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Brampton mainstreet LRT back on as council convenes

by **Alex Gregory**

A previously-scrapped plan to build a light rapid transit (LRT) system on Brampton's mainstreet corridor has been resuscitated, as city council voted unanimously to restart, complete with an underground tunnel in the downtown core.

The motion was made during last week's council meeting, pushed by Regional Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon, which aims to restart the mainstreet LRT project and extending it to Mayfield Road, while simultaneously replacing planned LRT routes on McLaughlin and Kennedy with a bus rapid transit (BRT) system.

The mainstreet LRT project is appealing because it's a "shovel-ready" project that's ready to go once funding is secured, said Wards 1&5 councillor Rowena Santos.

"Right now, we've got nothing," Santos told the packed crowd in Council chambers. "The only thing we've got right now to being shovel ready is the LRT."

The LRT project has had a contentious and divisive past, with previous efforts led during former Mayor Linda Jeffrey's reign failing due to political division.

The 2015 plan to build the downtown LRT with funding from the province, as part of a wider initiative to link Brampton GO to Port Credit GO via a seamless line failed, despite record civic engagement and public debates on the matter.

Council heard loud and clear from residents that they didn't want to see more infighting and political division, said Mayor Patrick Brown.

"They were saying, 'We don't want you fighting like schoolchildren... we want you to fight together."' said Brown, noting that all of the councillors want to move the city forward and present modern transit solutions.

"I'm grateful that we have a city council that was reasonable, that was willing to pause and look at things from different perspectives."

Brown further indicated that the decision to place a portion of the track underground on Main Street satisfied all of the councillors, as it protects heritage elements in the downtown core.

Dhillon's motion will go to a final vote this morning.

Brampton Reimagined plan faces crucial vote

The Downtown Brampton Reimagined project, which aimed to revitalize the city's downtown core and tie into a broader infrastructure replacement plan initiated by the Region of Peel, may be on the chopping block.

The city's director of capital works, Jayne Holmes, will make a recommendation at this morning's council meeting that the project be canceled due to higher-than-normal tenders and already-developed sites in the target area, local publication Brampton Focus revealed Tuesday.

The project, which was originally approved last May with a $28.9 million budget, was expected to begin earlier this year before it was announced that work would not start until later in the year.

The motion requests that the infrastructure replacement in the downtown core be postponed until a strategic framework for designing and implementing the projects has been developed.

The plan has received concerns from many groups, including businesses who have raised issues with the digging up of streets over a two-year period and escalating costs related to various developments.

The motion suggests three options for Council to pursue, including one that would move the project forward and begin work next spring without fully understanding the costs, a second option that would focus on the Region's required infrastructure upgrades while pausing the streetscape work, and a third option would stop both options until Council makes a later decision.

Eight Peel residents arrested in wide-ranging drug crackdown

Ontario Provincial Police announced Tuesday morning that it has broken an illegal gun trafficking ring in the Greater Toronto Area, with eight people in Peel, including a Brampton man and seven Mississauga residents, among the arrests.

23 individuals in total were arrested as a result of the eight-month long investigation, which netted 14 handguns, body armor, silencers, grenades, more than 1.2 kilograms of cocaine and $85,000, in addition to other seized weapons and drugs.

The investigation was complex and time-consuming, but helped break an organized crime network that had "multiple cells" within the province, OPP Deputy Commissioner Rick Barnum told reporters in Vaughan Tuesday.

"Because of this work, our communities are safer today," Barnum said, noting that the individuals charged in the investigation were linked to street gangs, human trafficking and drug manufacturing and distribution elements.

The investigation, dubbed Project Renner, was initiated earlier this past April by the OPP's Organized Crime Enforcement Bureau, and included cross-jurisdictional support from multiple police agencies in Peel, Halton, Durham, Hamilton and Niagara, among others.

39 police raids were conducted at sites across the GTA, Barnum said, with more than 400 police officers from several police forces involved in the operation.

The Mississauga residents arrested in the investigation include 35 year-old Acesia Ali, 21 year-old Lamar Andrews, 23 year-old Tajahan Kelly, 53 year-old Dwayne MacKenzie, 34 year-old Joevannie Peart, 25 year-old Jamar Quintyne and 26 year-old Jonathan Sinclair.

20 year-old Akil Jones, of Brampton, was also arrested as a result of the investigation.

In total, more than 150 charges were laid against the arrested individuals, who also lived in Hamilton, Milton, Rockwood, Smithwood and Toronto.

By taking down the criminal operation, police prevented illegal guns from killing more even people in communities throughout the Greater Toronto and Golden Horseshoe areas, Barnum said.

The accused persons are being held in custody and are expected to appear at Ontario Courts of Justice in the near future.

Drug paraphenelia seized during the Project Renner investigation was displayed by the OPP during a news conference on Dec. 11, 2018. (Photo Courtesy of Ontario Provincial Police)

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Driver-Martin celebrated as "leader" with "heart of gold"

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Clarkson Secondary School principal Mary Zammit said that the staff and teachers have dedicated support and guidance resources to help students deal with what happened, noting that "our thoughts are with the family and those impacted at this difficult time."

While police have not revealed whether there was a motive or if Driver-Martin and the Mahabir brothers knew each other, media representatives from Peel Police said they are treating the case as an isolated incident.

Both Nicholas and Mark Mahabir appeared in Brampton court over the weekend before being remanded into custody.

Mark Mahabir's lawyer, David Midanik, said in a scrum afterwards that his client was not guilty and that "a vigorous defence will be mounted."

Online reaction ranged from shock to disbelief, with friends and family saying the experience has profoundly impacted them.

"This young man was located (mere steps from my backyard)," said Jaydy Godin in an online post. "Our community will never forget his face and this senseless tragedy."

An online fundraiser has been set up on GoFundMe (gofundme.com/5j3j33-riley), which will help support the family's funeral costs.

In a post, Tierra Santa said that no one can ever be prepared for the loss of a family member.

"Knowing you will never be able to see, speak to, hear from or hold your child again is unimaginable," said Santa. "No amount of money can ease the pain this family is feeling, but any amount of monetary support would help to ease some of the financial stress."

"Challenging times" as Iannicca appointed to Peel chair

by **Alex Gregory**

Citing "challenging times" in regards to Peel Region's pressing issues, former Ward 7 Councillor Nando Iannicca was appointed as Regional Chair for the 2018-22, capping off months of speculation and uncertainty.

The election, held last week at the Region of Peel's Council Chambers, saw only two names step forward in a bid to take the role of chair - Iannicca, who stepped away from his career as a Mississauga councillor earlier this year, and former provincial finance minister Charles Sousa, who was nominated by Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown.

While there had been speculation as to several Brampton candidates, including former councillors Elaine Moore and Gael Miles and ousted Mayor Linda Jeffrey, the field quickly narrowed to a two-man race.

"We need who can steer the ship... and hit the ground running," said Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie, who put forward the nomination for Iannicca.

Several other councillors echoed her sentiments, including Wards 3&4's Martin Medeiros, who spoke of Iannicca's work on committees that impact residents daily, including the latter's role as board chair at Credit Valley Conservation.

"He has been a mentor figure to me," said Medeiros. That mentorship is what I look for in a chair."

Iannicca is the fifth Regional Chair in the Region's 44-year history, succeeding Frank Dale. He will take the reins of the region, which provides essential services for more than 1.4 million residents in the three municipalities.

In his inaugural address, Iannicca said that the region is a "special institution" that is well-positioned for the future, but will need to make major decisions on growing initiatives including transit and affordable housing.

"I look forward to working together with Regional Council to ensure that we respond to the needs of Peel region in these challenging times," he said.

Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson, who affirmed Iannicca's endorsement with a motion for a unanimous vote, said afterwards that it was a "new day in Peel", and that the region will be heading for some tough times, requiring all councillors and Mayors to work together to solve major problems affecting residents.

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Parents, protect your children this season

by **Doris Cooper**

I recently received the worst news any grandmother could ever hear.

My granddaughter was walking down the street recently in Hamilton when a man came up to them and attempted to scoop up my three year-old great-granddaughter.

My granddaughter had a hold of her daughter's hand and a shopping cart in the other hand.

Luckily, my granddaughter was able to free up her daughter by shoving the man away. She grabbed her daughter and her cart and fled the area.

A passerby also stopped to assist her, so the man decided to not follow them. However, he then went into a nearby mall and grabbed a 15 year-old girl.

She was able to get away - luckily for her, there was a security guard nearby. They arrested the man and he is currently in jail awaiting sentencing again for similar charges. Clearly the help he received in the previous imprisonment didn't work!

This is scary - and happening more and more!

I notice lately that every time I'm in the mall, there are several young children just running around witout parents with them.

Their caretakers are somewhere else, either socializing or shopping, and not paying attention to their children! We went into the mall behind a family recently, and watched as the children took off running when they entered the mall.

The children were running the length of 10-15 stores ahead of their parents. If someone should have grabbed their children, they would be gone before the parents could react!

With so many abductions or even attempted ones happening so frequently, it is important for parents to be aware of where exactly their children are.

If there is a lot of shopping to do, it is wise to hire a babysitter and leave the children home. With the coming Christmas season, the malls are going to be extremely busy. The children could be gone in a split-second.

Lately, there was been an increase in human trafficking incidents in our area of the country. It doesn't matter what age, male/female, rich or poor or even nationality you are. It doesn't matter!

You don't know if they are going to sold in "slavery", sexually abused or worse! The statistics are staggering.

If a child has been taken, you don't know what will be done to them. When it's reported to the news, the parents are devastated, and society tends to sympathize with them regardless of the lack of information given.

It is never reported that the children were just running around unattended with their parents so far away from them. The parents who are close enough to try to protect their children and can't get them back, are the parents I would sympathize with.

A long time ago, when my oldest daughter was growing up, she was sleeping over at her friend's house. They decided to go out in a unfavourable area of the city we were living in.

They didn't realize that if abducted, the person could have taken them anywhere. There was so many entrances to the highway in any direction! They couldn't understand why I was so upset with them.

I took my daughter to a nearby police station and we talked to an officer from the Children's department.

My daughter looked up at what she thought was appropriate decoration on the walls for this department. The wall was lined with photos of children.

The officer told her they weren't decorations, but photos of missing children in this city. She was shocked to realize there was that many missing children!

We need changes to what inmates receive in the way of "assistance" while incarcerated for their crime. I know a case where the person committed the same sexual crime four times and the last sentence was only two years!

In that case, the man only got six months and then probation. It seems that prison time isn't enough for these people (again, my opinion only). They get a roof over their head, three meals a day along with clothes to wear. They don't care what damage they have done to their victims.

My granddaughter's worse fear came true that day. She was conscious of her surroundings and her hidden power (Mama Bear) came into play with this man. She was lucky to push him away to save her daughter!

We must keep in mind when we go into crowded mals (or anywhere) that we never know who might be there, until it is too late.

Please keep your children near you and safe. You can better protect your children that way.

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Trio of Toronto crooks arrested after weapons seized in Mississauga

Three men and one woman are under arrest after a pair of weapon seizures within the span of an hour.

12 Division's Criminal Investigation Bureau made the announcement Tuesday evening in relation to a robbery that occurred the day before.

Police responded to the Mid-Way Boulevard and Invader Crescent area around 2:30 a.m. after receiving reports of a robbery with a firearm.

Arriving on the scene, officers investigated a vehicle leaving the area and found the occupants in possession of various drugs and a .45 caliber handgun.

As a result, three Toronto residents face numerous firearms and drug related charges, including 19 year-old Atrooba Mughal, 25 year-old Ashley Waldriff and 22 year-old Patrick-Adrian Agpoon.

A subsequent investigation revealed that the above individuals were not responsible for the robbery.

Based on information received at the incident location, officers arrested another man for the robbery.

Following the arrest, a SigSauer 9mm handgun was recovered. As a result, 32 year-old Ian Chambers, of Mississauga, was charged with numerous firearms and robbery offences.

The accused individuals appeared in Brampton court Tuesday morning for a bail hearing.

Anyone with additional information is asked to call investigators at the 12 Division Criminal Investigation Bureau at (905) 453–2121, ext. 1233.

Police appeal for help after shooting

Investigators from the Peel Regional Police 22 Division Criminal Investigation Bureau are appealing for witnesses in relation to a shooting that occurred in the City of Brampton.

On Tuesday, Oct. 30, 2018 at approximately 4:30 p.m., the victim, a 27 year-old man from Brampton, was at a residence in the area of Castlehill Road and Kirk Drive in Brampton.

At this time, two unknown suspects entered and shot the victim numerous times. The victim was transported to a trauma centre with serious injuries.

Investigators are appealing for witnesses, surveillance video, or anyone who may have information concerning this investigation to call investigators at the 22 Division Criminal Investigation Bureau at (905) 453-2121, ext. 2233.

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"Cold" controversy a time for reflection

by **Bruce Marshall**

Have you heard about the Baby It's Cold Outside controversy?

A Christmas music station in the U.S. got a compaint from a listener about the song. The listener thought it was a little "rapey" for the #MeToo era.

There has been a lot of hand wringing and pearl clutching about this. Some people think of it as trying to erase the past. Which it may be.

Truthfully, on the part of the radio station – this is a brilliant stunt. They could have got the complaint – dropped the song – and not said anything to anyone.

For the radio station, sending out the press release about this was a masterstroke of genius.

We talked about this issue on Friday on Newstalk Sauga 960AM. My dear friend Jodi Decker and I were co-hosting with Tashia Antoine, a Seneca radio student. Both ladies agreed that the song was perhaps a little too much – given that this attention has been paid to the lyrics.

When I hear it myself, I think, "yeah, that's a little inappropriate, maybe." Maybe as inappropriate as Al Jolson singing in black-face was once realized to be. (Jolson was an early film star who performed in "black-face." A white guy wearing rather garish black makeup.) But it took some way to realize how inappropriate it was.

Times change. What was acceptable before – is no longer acceptable – like performing in black-face.

For some, the times change too quickly. They can't keep up. And they can't see why a song that has been around forever is a problem now.

But what we're trying to build is an inclusive society. And even if this one barely significant song has to go – we're better off for it.

(And the "argument" that comes up about hip-hop music having nasty lyrics is spurious. You know what you're getting when you listen to hip-hop. If you're listening to Christmas music, you don't want the lyrics to suddenly make you feel creepy.)

I applaud the people who have spoken out about this. I'm glad that they finally feel that society has evolved to the point where they can express their discomfort.

Even if some feel that we're "coddling" some people – let's consider what may have happened to them that the lyrics of a Christmas song are threatening to them! What kind of horror do you have to have endured to make this an emotional issue for you?

No – they don't have to "buck up," nor do they have to have "not such a thin skin." I know people who have been through assaults – you carry that stuff with you your whole life! And I'm not going to be the one to tell them that they have to "get over" something they feel is threatening.

I had a conversation with a dear friend the other day on this very topic. I told her that I thought the best world we could live in would be one where everyone is included – and nobody feels like an outsider.

That's what this issue over a Christmas song and so many of these other issues that are bubbling to the surface is all about. If anyone has felt like an outsider or vulnerable – I think we need to cut that crap out.

Everyone belongs. And if we have to sacrifice one Christmas song to do it – I think we're better with more people feeling included and a few less Christmas songs.

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Peel Matters - Counsel for new councils

by **Catherine Soplet**

On Dec. 6 at Peel Regional Council, nearly 150 people cozily tucked into Council chambers to take in the appointment of the next 2018-22 Chair.

Rumours of numerous candidates soon materialized as only two nominations: Nando Iannicca, the 30-year Mississauga Ward 7 Councillor and former Ontario finance minister Charles Sousa, who served 11 years as a MPP for Mississauga South.

Anticipation for proceedings was muted and calm, compared to the 2014 run-off to replace the 23-year term of outgoing Emil Kolb.

In that year, the run-off selection of Councillor Frank Dale amongst eight contending nominees took place in a packed room of 500 people at Mississauga Convention Centre.

In surveying the relative calm of 2018, the opening lines from A Tale of Two Cities came tapped a spoken-word rhythm to match a choreography of handshakes and hobnobbing, ahead of proceedings.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times - it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness - it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity - it was the season of light. ...". Author Charles Dickens described conditions at the onset of The French Revolution.

More than 200 years later, it seems Dickens' words aptly describe the entire world's political experience over the last 12 months. In Ontario, in the Region of Peel, we saw our fair share.

Beginning in January, last year's candidates nominated under Patrick Brown's leadership of the PC Party of Ontario in March had to pick a new leader during a fractious race. Then in May, they ran an election campaign under the former leader's antithesis, Rob Ford. In Mississauga and Brampton, PC candidates were swapped out at the last minute.

On the day after the June 7 election, novice PC and NDP candidates prevailed in a clean sweep of Peel Region's incumbent and long-serving Liberal MPPs.

Over the summer, some failed provincial candidates joined the ranks of already-committed municipal and school board candidates in a bid for election on Oct. 22.

Races were hotly contested in wards where legacy incumbents stepped away from their political posts, which led to some first-time elected councillors being tapped for succession.

The appetite for wholesale change even took out 20-year politician Linda Jeffrey as a one-term Brampton Mayor. Jeffrey lost a tight race to newly-emigrated candidate Patrick Brown.

Six weeks later on Dec. 6, no sooner has momentum of municipal elections seemed to change everything, when the newly-inaugurated Mayors of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon called for appointment of the Peel Region Chair who could return to providing solid, predictable and productive services, that were prudently delivered.

Peel Region, after all, is the home to former Premier William G. Davis, whose "Bland is Best" brand of government held tenure during Ontario's longest period of sustained growth.

Mayoral nominators of the next Peel Chair each pointed to uncertain times for Peel Region as the Ontario government begins its review of regional governance.

The Ontario government review coincides with a mandate to create a Community Safety and Well Being Plan by Jan. 2021, likely on reduced budgets in spring 2019, at the same time as residents are experiencing higher needs for income, housing, social services and healthcare.

Such societal preconditions sparked the French Revolution. Such preconditions also spurred the creation of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a document which later informed the encoding the 1948 United Nations - Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

One made-in-Peel solution which aligns with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the 2007 Peel Youth Charter.

In 2007, the Charter was unanimously endorsed by Peel Region and municipal councils, public and separate school boards; Peel and Ontario policing; and agency partners in the not-for-profit sector.

To recognize its 10-year anniversary in 2017, renewed endorsements were unanimously endorsed. On May 10, a signing ceremony sealed Peel leadership commitments for best efforts of local governments and agency partners to ensure safety, health, education and jobs for all youth in Peel.

Bland works best. Incumbents and newly-elected can be clear on how to provide solid, predictable and productive services, prudently delivered.

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BUSINESS

EllisDon and Peel school board pick up employer awards

The region's board of education and a Mississauga developer were among the recipients named in a prestigious employer list announced last week.

EllisDon and the Peel District School Board were named as two of the recipients on the 13th annual list of Greater Toronto's Top Employers, which were revealed on Dec. 7.

Employers throughout the Greater Toronto Area were evaluated by the editors of Canada's Top 100 Employers to determine which of them within the GTA are leading their industries in offering exceptional workplaces for their employees.

The top organizations were recognized for attracting talent outside of their industries, particularly focused in technology, while offering a mixture of traditional benefits and flexible options that cater to different individuals.

In a statement, EllisDon senior vice-president Andrew Anderson said the company was honored to be recognized.

"It is a true testament to our employee-centered organization and our belief that success starts at the core," Anderson said. "We constantly strive to provide our employees with a collaborative working environment that provides them flexibility and freedom to drive their entrepreneurial spirit and innovative thinking, ultimately helping to grow and propel their careers forward."

Similarly, PDSB education director Peter Joshua said the award was a celebration of the community and the 16,000 staff who currently serve at schools in the region.

"As the Peel region's largest employer, our goal remains on attracting highly qualified, diverse staff who are committed to excellence, have a passion for innovation and most importantly, to support student success... this recognition is an important benchmark in our ongoing work to achieve that goal," said Joshua.

The employers were graded on eight criteria,including their workplace, social attributes, employee benefits, communications, performance management, training and skills development; and community involvement.

The winners were honored at a recognition luncheon on Dec. 7 in Toronto.

Caledon announces green awards for clean energy

The Town of Caledon recently received multiple environmental leadership awards for municipal and corporate achievements in the areas of energy conservation, waste diversion and environmental performance.

"Town Staff continue to work collaboratively across departments to reduce our corporate energy consumption and improve our municipality's environmental performance," Mayor Allan Thompson said in a statement Friday.

"Caledon has a long-standing municipal legacy of environmental leadership, and these recent awards and recognition affirm that the Town continues to be on the right path, doing what's right for the environment."

This year, the Town received multiple awards and formal recognition for its environmental efforts over the past two years, including the Don Harrison Energy Champion Award, awarded to Recreation Coordinators Cam Coulter and Phil Lankhof for energy saving projects in building operations through lighting retrofits, ice plant controls, and energy operator training; the Mayor's Megawatt Challenge Award, which was given to the Mayfield Recreation Complex for energy conservation initiatives; the SaveOn Energy - Energy Innovation Award, which recognized the Town's focus on energy retrofit projects establishing an energy revolving fund; the 2018 Partners in Project Green Waste Diversion certificate, for diverting 156 kilograms of clothing and materials from landfills through a staff campaign; and the Partners in Project Green Legacy Leader award, which the Town received for its continuing engagement to build the green economy in Peel Region and the GTA.

Thompson said that the Town will continue to focus on reducing corporate wide greenhouse gases while introducing a new greenhouse gas reduction framework that will inform and prioritize mitigation actions to help further decrease greenhouse gas emissions emitted by the Town from 2019-24.

(L-R) Mayor Allan Thompson; Fuwing Wong (General Manager/Chief Financial Officer); Cristina Guido (Energy & Environment Specialist); Katelyn McFadyen (Energy & Environment Manager); Phil Lankhof (Recreation Coordinator); Mike Galloway (Chief Administrative Officer); Cam Coulter (Recreation Coordinator)(Submitted Photo)

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Seniors' issues highlighted at Brampton town hall meeting

More than 100 residents turned out for a town hall meeting Saturday in Brampton to hear from some of the country's most prominent advocates and have their concerns addressed.

The event, held at the Chris Gibson Recreation Centre, saw participants hearing from Minister of Seniors Filomena Tassi, Brampton-North MP Ruby Sahota and Brampton-South MP Sonia Sidhu, who answered questions and discussed their strategy for ensuring that the federal government provides proper support to the country's aging population.

"The (government) recognizes the remarkable contribution that Canadian seniors have made to our society and economy over the years," Sahota told the crowd. "We continue to take measures to ensure seniors can enjoy the fulfilling lives that they very much deserve."

Seniors remain a top priority going forward, she said, and the government is committed to supporting encouraging them to stay active and involved in their communities."

Tassi reinforced that seniors issues are a priority for the government, pointing to income security, accessible housing initiatives and expanded seniors' programs.

Participants also had the opportunity to speak directly with the Minister about several issues, including financing security, seniors' housing and healthcare needs, consumer protection including fraud, seniors' programming, poverty, protection of workplace pensions, and how best to move forward with the implementation of national pharmacare.

Input sought on draft Recreation Master Plan

Mississauga is seeking input from residents and stakeholders on several long-range service plans for the Culture, Recreation, Parks & Forestry, Library, and Fire & Emergency Services divisions, which were unveiled at the city's inaugural council meeting last week.

Last year, the City asked the community to share their thoughts on the future of programs and services for these five key areas and received a lot of input and suggestions.

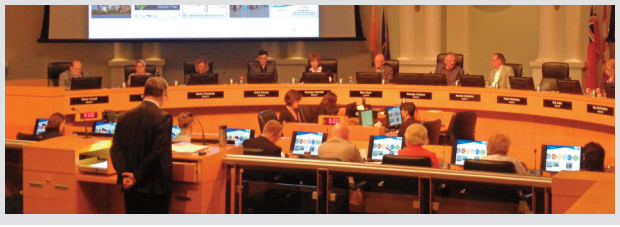
The input was combined with other relevant data, inputs and trends to guide how the City spends its time, resources and funds on community priorities.

Residents and stakeholders can now provide their feedback before Jan. 4, 2019. Feedback can be provided either online or by attending a Public Information Centre.

The City will review the feedback and revise the plans before presenting the final plans to Council in January 2019.

A public information session for the draft master plans will be held tomorrow evening at Meadowvale Community Centre (6655 Glen Erin Dr.), from 6 -9 p.m. in the Youth/Senior Room.

The city has also launched an online survey at yoursay.mississauga.ca/yourfuture, which residents can visit to view the draft plans and share their feedback online.



Transit and city services key parts of Mississauga budget

by **Alex Gregory**

A 2.75 per cent residential tax increase for residential properties and 31,000 additional hours of service on MiWay transit are among the highlights of Mississauga's annual budget, which will be presented to residents this morning.

The City presented its official 2019 Business Plan and Budget, detailing some of the area's key priorities - and expenses - as it heads into a new term.

"We are a municipality that certainly... pays a lot of attention to our fiscal condition, and we are in good financial shape," city manager Janice Baker said during a breakfast held just prior to the budget unveiling at the inaugural council meeting for the 2018-22 term.

The city's proposed operating budget will be $874.2 million dollars, with approximately $362.5 million of that amount being offset through revenue from development charges and transit/recreation fees.

Residents living in a detached single-family home will see an additional 2.75 per cent property tax ($146.32) added to their bill next year, while commercial/industrial businesses will have a 1.67 per cent tax added on to their bottom line.

The city's proposed residential tax increase is in line with current inflation rates, said Baker, pointing to the continuing maintenance of $9 billion in city-owned infrastructure and costs associated with improvements to essential city services and facilities.

"We believe we deliver value for tax dollars, and certainly we've put a very sharp focus on continuous improvement," she said. "We are committed to delivering value for money."

The city is also proposing a number of major projects and upgrades, including a four-year Public Fire Safety Reserve program worth $9.4 million, an increase in arts spending per capita and planned modernization and program efforts in the city's library system, including a redevelopment project associated with Mississauga Central Library that is planned to offer digital tools and infrastructure improvements.

The balance of the operating budget will go towards maintaining city services at their current levels, including transit, roads, emergency services, development charges and park maintenance.

"Our infrastructure is aging, and maintenance costs to repair our roads and bridges are continuing," said Baker. "Repairs cost money."

Increasing the supply of affordable housing is also an area the city is paying particular attention to, with a focus on examining policies and legislation to find a way to incentivize developers to ensure that units made more available to low- and mid-income residents, said Baker.

A number of new and increased fees and charges have also been proposed for next year, including a MiWay Presto fare increase effective May 1, 2019, along with environmental compliance/road occupancy permit fees.

The additional revenue from the new programs and increases will bring in approximately $2.3 million.

The city will host additional public consultation opportunities going into the new year, with Budget Committee meetings scheduled for Jan. 14, 15, 21, 22 and 28.

The budget is expected to be approved by Mississauga council on Feb. 6, 2019.

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Alectra boosts wiring on key Brampton corridor

The region's largest electricity provider announced last week that it has completed a modernization projeect on one of Brampton's busiest streets.

A $2.2 million-dollar infrastructure project that runs from Mackay Street North from Bovaird Drive East and North Park Drive and on Howden Boulevard between Dixie Road and Williams Parkway East, was completed last month, according to Alectra Utilities.

The Brampton-based provider's infrastructure project was initiated to replace deteriorated cables and improve electrical service reliability in the community.

8.2 kilometres of underground cable were planted during the project, which was supported by eight new above-grade padmounted switching units.

In a statement, the company said it is continuing to invest in local energy grids in order to ensure reliable service and support growth efforts.

Alectra, whose operations office is located on Sandalwood Parkway, serves approximately one million customers across 15 communities in the province.

Brampton automation company rolls out new package project

When Paul Langen started AFA Systems Packaging Automation in Brampton in 2001, he had 60 years of family history in the packaging industry to fall back on. And keeping up with technological trends, he focused his business on packaging automation equipment – serving a global client base with options to automate the packaging of their food, confectionary, pharmaceutical and consumer products.

Since launch, AFA Systems has implemented more than a thousand packaging systems worldwide, with various robotics and automation partners like Codian and Rockwell Automation. The company has consistently looked for innovative solutions, making it part of their DNA.

"I've always known that as a small company, our size advantage is the ability to focus on innovation, solving complex challenges and using our flexibility to find opportunities," AFA Systems president Paul Langen said during an interview last month.

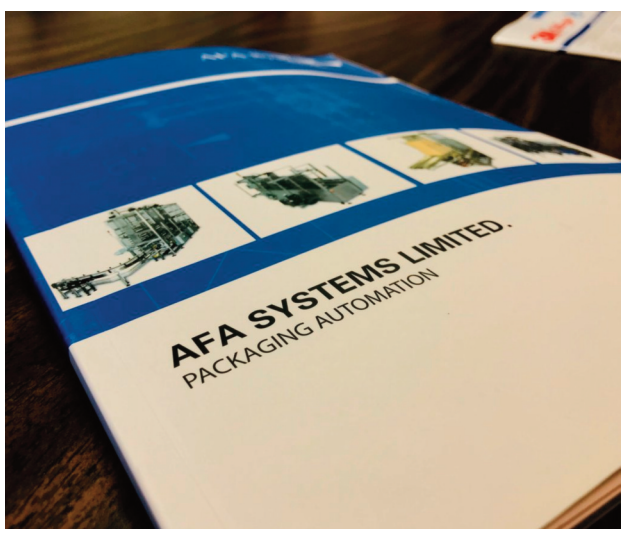
One of AFA Systems' most recent accomplishments is the rollout of its Infinitus Project, which packages small liquid vials of product at an amazing speed of 1,200 vials per minute.

Designed, developed and tested in Brampton, Langen says it is is a testament to the strength of the engineering capacity available in our city and the opportunities that companies like AFA Systems create.

The Infinitus Project is worth an estimated $2.8 million, and will provide AFA Systems with another successful global implementation, building on its existing reach into the United States, Argentina and other countries, Langen said in a statement.

"The opportunities for Brampton companies to compete globally require thinking bigger, outside of the local area. There are opportunities, but you have to be open to new experiences and understand the importance of new and diversified markets," says Langen.

This commitment to innovation and international growth are key aspects of government initiatives including the federal government's recent approval of an Advanced Manufacturing Supercluster, which has been funded to provide support for transformative businesses and build capacity throughout the advanced manufacturing community, the company said in a statement.



Bolton bar and grill celebrates 30 years of good eats

The savory smell of freshly grilled burger patties, the sound of laughter infused with music, and a cheerful welcome by owner Bruno Bertone lets customers know they have arrived at Cheeks Bar and Grill.

The small family restaurant on King Street in Bolton will be celebrating 30 years of serving residents and visitors in the local area, and they are still going strong. Bertone personally serves the meals, sharing moments with old customers or greeting new faces..

Cheeks is run by both Bruno and his brother, Robert Bertone. Bruno recently spoke to the Town of Caledon about his experiences as a long-time resident and business owner in Bolton:

When did you start this business?

We will be celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2019.

Cheeks Bar and Grill was started by our friends and my brother and I bought it and took over in 1989, and we have been here since then.

We are one of the original store owners that opened in the Royal Courtyards - when we signed the lease, it wasn't even built yet.

How many staff members do you have?

I currently have 12 part-time employees. We also partner with Humberview's co-op program and offer students the opportunity to learn and enhance their skills. If they want to learn, we are willing to teach them.

You have seen Bolton evolve - what changes have you witnessed?

I have been here for a long time and I have seen many changes around here. Many are good, and some not so much. This town has a lot of potential and can get stronger if new businesses open in the area. Rejuvenating the core would be great for this town.

What is the most popular item on the menu and why?

There are a few items that are quite popular. We are known for our variety of burgers and wings but customers tell us they also love the pasta we make.

What's homemade on the menu?

Our pasta sauces are homemade and so are the burgers and soups. People can tell when food is fresh and homemade. That's why I have such loyal customers who come here for their favorite dish. Our prices are reasonable and our quality speaks for itself.

Do you source locally?

I go to Garden Foods for meat, vegetables and other items. I have a good relationship with them, and they are known for their good reputation and quality produce.

What's your favorite dish on the menu?

I love the Penne Alla Vodka, which is a combination of sautéed pasta with fresh mushrooms, green onions, bacon, cream, tomato sauce, and vodka. I also like our Spicy Hot Texas Style burger.

Do you use any of the family recipes?

My mother was a cook and my father used to run a restaurant, so the background and love for good food is certainly there. We have a certified chef in the kitchen and everyone here is experienced which has helped us create a good name in the community.

My business partner, Louie Rubino, also works in the kitchen overseeing all the details and processes.

What's great about having a business in Bolton?

I was born and raised in Toronto but I love Bolton. It's a beautiful town. When I first opened the business, I was commuting back and forth from Toronto, but in 1994, I decided to move my family here. My children were raised in Bolton and I believe that was the best decision.

Cheeks Bar and Grill is located at 18 King St. E in Bolton. For more details, visit cheeksbarandgrill.ca.

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PEEL WEEKLY NEWS
Digital Newspaper
SPORTS

Steelheads support charity with Toys for Tots game

In conjunction with Peel Regional Police and the Salvation Army, the Mississauga Steelheads are set to host the annual Toys for Tots game this Friday night at the Paramount Centre, as they take on the Sault St. Marie Greyhounds.

The Steelheads will be collecting new unwrapped toys, cash and Canadian Tire money to support under privileged children between the ages of 0-14.

The team is aiming to help make a difference for over 1,000 families in need this Christmas.

By collecting new unwrapped toys for under privileged children within the community, the initiative helps provide "a little magic to many children in need" and create a lifetime of memories," said Peel Regional Police Cst. Laura Tyrer, who co-chairs the campaign.

"The Steelheads have been hosting an annual game on our behalf for many years. Their generous support towards the campaign has helped us immensely," Tyrer said Tuesday evening.

This year, the Steelheads Hockey Club has partnered with Salvation Army to meet needs in the community more directly.

Salvation Army representative Major Doug Binner said that the organization is always ready to meet the needs of those less fortunate in the community.

The Salvation Army's Christmas Kettle Campaign financial goal is to raise $150,000, which will be used at Christmas and throughout the year to assist families in need within Mississauga.

"Your generous support at Friday's home game will help to make a difference to thousands of families in need this Christmas," said Binner.

"Thank you for giving generously when you see The Salvation Army Kettle at the game on Friday."

Steelheads End Recent Slide

by **Brendan Lang**

Mississauga had been in a terrible skid of late losing their last six contests in a row - and it was time to change their fate.

Last Friday, the Trout welcomed the Oshawa Generals to town in hopes of ending their recent slide. The game did not start out very promising for the Steelheads, as they allowed two quick tallies from the Generals to trail by two.

Just before the period would close out Ryan McLeod of the Steelheads inched them closer, as the deficit was shaved to one going into intermission.

The score stayed stagnant throughout the second 20 minutes of play and the Fish once again trailed heading into the third frame.

Mississauga came out with determination in the third period and tied the game with Liam Ham scoring his first goal as a Steelhead. Once the game was tied, Nicholas Canade put them ahead.

Cole Carter would also score in the period to close out a much needed 4-2 victory for the Fish, snapping their six game slide.

The team had Saturday off before they welcomed the Saginaw Spirit into town as well for a Sunday afternoon tilt.

This time, the Trout started quickly getting two markers from Ryan McLeod and Alan Lyszczarczyk. Nicholas Porco cut the lead in half for Saginaw. The score was 2-1 for the Fish heading into the first break despite being outshot in the period.

The Spirit scored almost immediately once the second frame began on a goal from Cole Coskey. James Hardie for Mississauga gave them a brief one goal advantage but that quickly evaporated as the Spirit answered in a heartbeat.

The score was deadlocked at three to begin the third stanza. The Steelheads experienced some tough luck in the third as Saginaw took the lead with about six minutes remaining plus they added an empty netter to seal the game. Saginaw won 5-3.

The Steelheads will now play three times next week; first hosting the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds this Friday (Dec. 14).

On Saturday, they travel to Guelph to play the Storm and Sunday will see them return home for another matchup with the Sudbury Wolves.

Admirals fight through pain while Bombers deal with Sugar Kings

The injury bug has gone through the Admirals.

With Captain Hudson Lambert on the shelf with a lower body injury, the team dropped three of their four games this past week with their lone win coming this past Thursday the 6th against the Brantford 99ers.

Vincent Bonaiuto was the lone Admirals goal scorer during the Teddy Bear toss game on Saturday, Dec. 8 against the Brantford 99ers.

On the injury front, forward Michael Hill left Saturday's game with what's been diagnosed as a twisted knee; Fellow forward Dakota Zarudny bowed out early of Sunday's contest against the Mississauga Chargers.

On a positive note, forward Rocco Andreacchi was named the OJHL's North-West Conference Player-of-the-Month for November.

He tallied 10 goals and 15 points during nine games. He also went penalty-free during the month.

The Bombers engaged in a home and home set with the Elmira Sugar Kings.

In Brampton, Owen Porter was solid in the crease with 35 saves while Peter Drikos's defence had times where they bent but didn't break in a 4-2 victory, marking the first time since last November that the Bombers beat the Sugar Kings.

Marcus Didiano was the man to send the Teddy Bears flying in the second period; he had two goals on the night.

Hughie Sheppard converts on the powerplay last in the third period and Brandan Fisher seals it into an empty net. Didiano was able to extend his point streak to four games as he collected two points in the rematch in Elmira on Sunday.

It was the hometown Sugar Kings winning it in double overtime 5-4. Remy Dalben, Andrew Reynolds and Ivan Brewer all score in the loss.

Owen Porter makes 38 saves in the loss.

Boucher, 905 Pull Away From Go-Go

The Capital City Go-Go (4-6) were defeated by the Raptors 905 (12-3), 110-102, Saturday night at the Entertainment and Sports Arena.

Trailing by as many as 13 in the first half, the 905 charged back in the second half and put the game away with an 8-1 run over the last 3:27 of the game.

The 905 were led by NBA G League leading scorer and Raptors' two-way player, Chris Boucher, who poured in 28 points and five rebounds in the contest. Rodney Pryor scored 15 of his 21 points in the second half, including five points in the 905's final run after a Tiwian Kendley three-pointer put the Go-Go within one.

Kendley finished with 15 points off the bench for Capital City in the game.

Toronto's other two-way player, Jordan Loyd, tallied 22 points and 10 assists for his eighth 20-point game of the season, and his first double-double. The 905 went 15-of-38 (.395) from three, making seven more threes than the Go-Go.

The 905 also forced the Go-Go into 26 turnovers, leading to 26 points.

Chasson Randle led the Go-Go with 22 points, his fifth 20-point game in five games played with the team this season.

Two-way player Devin Robinson tallied his team-leading sixth double-double of the season with 20 points and a season-high 17 rebounds. Wizards' first-round draft pick, Troy Brown Jr., tacked on 17 points, eight rebounds and four assists.

The 905 will head home to face Oklahoma City tonight at the Paramount Centre.

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MetroStars dominate Tropics during home opener shutout

by **Alex Gregory**

They never stood a chance.

If there was any doubt or hesitation within the Mississauga MetroStars, it was erased just minutes into the team's inaugural home opener at the Paramount Centre Saturday afternoon, as Mo Babouli led the charge to a 10-0 shutout against the Florida Tropics.

Things got off to a heated start in the first quarter, with the MetroStars needing to prove their worth after losing the inaugural opener in Baltimore last week.

Babouli, buoyed by forward Dwayne De Rosario, opened up the scoring at 13:38 in with a decisive shot past Jorge Navarette.

With the team riding high going into the second quarter, the team begin to keep up sustained pressure and drove in three more goals, with Babouli adding his second goal just over a minute in.

Babouli completed his three-goal performance with the tenth and final goal of the match at 14:42 of the fourth quarter.

He added two assists on the day to give him five points in the game.

Martinho Dumevski added a pair for the MetroStars with goals either side of the halftime break.

Meanwhile, Dwayne De Rosario added his third goal of the season just 47 seconds into the fourth quarter. De Rosario also contributed three assists.

Alen Kucalovic, Sebastian Lopez, Lerohne Young and ex-Tropics midfielder Marco Rodriguez rounded out the scoring for the MetroStars. Adrian Becic earned the shutout, making 13 saves.

The MetroStars continue their mini homestand tomorrow night, as they take on the Kansas City Comets at the Paramount Centre. Kickoff is at 7:35 p.m.

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PEEL WEEKLY NEWS Digital Newspaper

LIFESTYLE / AROUND TOWN

Greenway celebrates talented seniors at film fest

by **Alex Gregory**

A group of seniors who with lifelong passions and overwhelming optimism were the focus of a film festival held in Brampton last week.

Revera's Greenway retirement residence hosted the "Age is More" Film Project on Thursday, Dec. 6, which brought ten seniors together with a group of youths to create a series of short films centered around the theme of "seniors with talent", that showcased social issues and highlight the unique life stories of its residents.

"We knew them, but we didn't know their talents," said Leslie McLean, one of the subjects of the short films.

McLean, along with her partner Winston Chase, greatly enjoyed the experience of filming and learned more about the perspective and work of Ashleigh Lavoie, one of the student participants in the project.

"We learned that everyone has something to share," said McLean.

The films are specially-produced documentaries that largely focus on the retirement provider's efforts to combat ageism.

Having a film festival that connects seniors and youths has many great benefits for the groups involved and for the community as a whole, said festival program facilitator Mutya Macatumpag, who moderated a Q&A session with the participants after a screening of the ten films.

"When people have an opportunity to share their with the community, it helps everyone grow," said Macatumpag, who has worked with intergenerational and youth groups throughout Canada and the U.S.

The film festival provided a great way for the youths to learn more from their elders and hone their skills in a safe, supportive atmosphere that fosters creativity and further development, she said.

The project has global potential, said Macatumpag, and she hopes to see it replicated at other homes throughout the country, building off Revera's success hosting similar senior-oriented fim festivals throughout Canada.

Patricia Legate, the subject of her own short film, showcased her long-running career as a dancer and teacher, and expressed admiration for aspiring filmmaker Harleen Harleen for capturing the essence of her life and continuing efforts to promote what she loves.

"When you're around so many enthusiastic young people, you work to keep up with them," said Legate.

The Honourable Bill Davis, former Premier of Ontario and Revera's Board Chair Emeritus, was also on-hand during the event to congratulate the participants and express his hope for future youth film festivals in Brampton.

To watch the films, visit ageismore.com.

A Winter Wonderland of activities kicks off in Brampton

A plethora of winter activities and events are set to take Brampton by storm over the winter season, with outdoor ice skating rinks and holiday programs in hot demand.

The City announced Friday morning that the Gage Park Outdoor Skating Trail has opened to the public, offering scenic Christmas-themed views and plenty of acreage for residents looking to enjoy a break in a "downtown oasis".

In addition to Gage Park, Chinguacousy Park Skate Trail and Mount Pleasant Outdoor Skating Rink, several other ice rinks are set to open over the coming season, with the Gore Meadows Community Centre covered outdoor ice rink set to open in the near future.

All three outdoor ice skating rinks are free to use - for further updates, visit brampton.ca/EN/residents/Recreation/Programs-Activities/Pages/Outdoor-Skating.

This Saturday, Chinguacousy Park (9050 Bramalea Rd.) brings a bit of Christmas cheer to the north end will a full day of family activities, including breakfast with Santa, writing letters to Santa and building gingerbread houses, beginning at 9:3. Registration is required for each activity.

To register, visit brampton.ca/EN/residents/Recreation/Programs-Activities.

Mount Chinguacousy comes alive when the snow falls.

Bundle up and hit the slopes beginning Dec. 27 (weather permitting) on Brampton's own ski, snowboard and tubing hill. Improve your skills with a ski or snowboard lesson and warm up in the cozy chalet.

The entrance to the ski chalet is at the corner of Central Park Drive and Bramalea Road.

Residents are also invited to drop off non-perishable food items or new, unwrapped toys at City Hall or any community centre or library in Brampton until Saturday, Dec. 16.

Donations will be given to local food bank and community kitchen, The Knights Table, to be distributed to families in need in the community.

The holidays are a magical time in Brampton, said Mayor Patrick Brown in a statement last week, who encouraged the community to come out and visit all the different events.

"Our city sparkles with thousands of lights, friends and families glide across our skating rinks and down Mount Chinguacousy, we count down to the New Year with incredible entertainment and we spread joy by giving back to our community," Brown said.

"The 2018 holiday season is filled with fun for everyone, and I encourage everyone) to take part in the festivities."

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Legendary investigative journalist to speak at LAC

One of North America's pre-eminent journalists is set to take the stage next month for a wide-ranging discussion on the state of American politics and a look back on his own career.

Two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Bob Woodward will speak during a special one-night-only event at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga on Jan. 17, 2019, beginning at 8 p.m. in Hammerson Hall.

The marquee event will be hosted by TVO's Steve Paikin, who hosts the network's flagship current affairs program, *The Agenda*, and will be speaking to Woodward about the "inside scoop" in Washington during the current presidency, the American and global economy and a comparison of how the current political climate compares with administrations past.

Woodward shot to fame at the age of 29, when he and fellow reporter Carl Bernstein broke the Watergate scandal in Washington in 1972, which eventually led to the resignation of then-President Richard Nixon.

The author of 19 best-selling books – 13 of which have been #1 - Woodward's most recent work, FEAR: Trump in the White House, sold more than 1.1 million copies in its first week.

The new book provides a behind-the-scenes examination of what's really going on in Washington and what it means.

In 2014, Robert Gates, former director of the CIA and secretary of defense, said of Woodward, "He has an extraordinary ability to get otherwise responsible adults to spill [their] guts to him . . . his ability to get people to talk about stuff they shouldn't be talking about is just extraordinary and may be unique."

Woodward pulls the curtain back on Washington and its leaders to captivate audiences with stories that are sometimes surprising, at times shocking, and always fascinating.

The event will blend stories that are both up to the minute and from the past (to provide historical context). Woodward will speak as he writes – crisp and concise – and help people get behind the spin to understand what's really going on in the halls of power in an age of 24-hour news, social media, and snarky politics.

Tickets for the event are available for $90 and up, and can be purchased by calling the LAC Box Office (905-306-000) or by visiting the event website at livingartscentre.ca.

Caledon church will host a "Dickens" of an evening

Caledon East United Church will bring the spirit of a classic novelist to the region this Sunday (Dec. 16), with a re-telling and re-creation of Charles Dickens' Christmas Classic "A Christmas Carol"!

The one-time performance, which begins at 3:30 p.m., will see performers bringing to live the classic Christmas fable as part of a fundraiser to benefit Partera Peacebuilders International.

Tickets for the fundraiser are $20, while children 12 and under get in free.

For tickets, call Leone Beck (905) 584-9346 or the church office at (905) 584-9974.

Local MPs, dignitaries, representatives of human service agencies and members of the community joined together this past weekend at Mississauga's Civic Centre to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The document, which was adopted by the United Nations on Dec. 10, 1948, marked the first time that countries agreed on a comprehensive statement of inalienable human rights.

It declares that human rights are universal – to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are or where they live.

The event, which drew more than 100 guests, included a video message from UN Secretary General António Guterres, presentations from MPs Sven Spengemann (Mississauga-Lakeshore) and Iqra Khalid (Mississauga-Erin Mills), a smudging ceremony officiated by Cat Criger and displays of the Charter and associated documents.

The Universal Declaration has been translated into a world record 500 languages, which was highlighted during the event.

As part of the 70th anniversary campaign, the UN is holding a campaign to bring awareness to human rights organizations and initiatives called "Stand Up for Human Rights", which can be viewed by visiting standup4humanrights.org.

Throughout the month of November, Peel Regional Police officers from 11 Division 'C' Platoon grew facial hair in support of Movember Canada.

A total of $3,350 was raised for the foundation, which advocates for men's health in prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health, and suicide prevention.

Last Tuesday, Liboys Barbershop in Mississauga graciously opened their doors to Peel Police to help conclude the awareness initiative for men's health.

The participating officers received a complimentary facial hair trim or shave by the shop owner, Roberto Rago.

On behalf of 11 Division, Cst. Andrew Cooper expresses his gratitude to everyone who donated and participated in the event, stating they are "looking forward to the subsequent campaign next year".

For more information on the Movember Foundation, visit ca.movember.com and to learn more about the other charities we support visit our website.

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December and the Festive Season

by **Elizabeth Banfalvi**

What a month! There are so many goings on and everyone is busy decorating trees, their homes and buying gifts.

Nowadays, we need to remember to be more giving but at times we overdo it and stress is all we feel.

In Europe, Dec. 6 is celebrated as St. Nicholas Day. St. Nicholas is regarded as the patron saint and celebrated with different activities such as gift-giving, parades, feasts and festivals.

On the night of Dec. 6, children throughout Europe put their shoes or a special St. Nicholas boot in front of the fireplace or the front door at night to find them filled with small presents the next morning. A larger number of gifts are usually brought by the eve of St. Nicholas Day or Dec. 5.

He inspired both the figure of the North American Santa Claus and the British Father Christmas.

St. Nicholas, the legendary figure, is derived from Nicholas of Myra, who officiated as a bishop in 4th century Greece. During his lifetime, he developed a reputation for gift-giving by putting coins in other people's shoes, which accounts for many of today's Christmas traditions that involve leaving gifts in shoes or boots. St. Nicholas wears a long red robe and head piece like a bishop and has the legendary long white hair and beard.

Most who still believe in this tradition give small gifts at this time and then Christmas is all about filling the stockings and the larger gifts.

Dec. 24 is the advent of the Santa Claus travelling all over the world, sliding down chimneys and placing gifts under the tree.

Children usually leave him cookies and milk and off to bed they go to wake up very early in the morning to open their many presents. What a treat!

Dec. 25 is the official Christmas Day, and that is when we open presents and eat a wonderful feast of turkey and stuffing and all the glorious treats. This is often a time of church going and honouring our Christian traditions.

One other happening that we don't like to think of is the 'Christmas holiday effect' on mortality, with spikes in deaths from natural causes at or before Christmas.

People who have been sick or incapacitated sometimes succumb at this time. A 2004 study found just under five per cent more deaths over the end-of-year holiday period.

Being a very family-oriented holiday also affects depressed and lonely people who have no family. More fund raisers are done at this time to serve a holiday meal or give gifts for people who can't afford to buy toys and games for younger people.

One company I worked for did a fund raising every year to buy a family (adults and their children) what they needed for the season. They always took on older children, the ones usually too difficult to buy for.

One year, they raised money for an older teenager who was out on his own for the first time and wanted bedding for himself. He got it, along with gift certificates to use as he wished. He sent us a photo sitting on his bed surrounded by his bedding and new pillows.

If you listen to all the Christmas music being played, this is actually a sad season for people who miss their family or relationships or just going back to a more innocent time.

The greatest song I hear is "I'll Be Home for Christmas", originally recorded in 1943 by Bing Crosby. It was written to honor soldiers overseas who longed to be home at Christmas time and probably couldn't so they would be there in their dreams.

It has since gone on to become a Christmas standard.

The custom of sending Christmas cards was started in the UK in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole. It is still the same but now we have the options of sending a wish or card on the internet.

It is still the most active postal time of the year. Who doesn't get excited by getting a card and opening it up to enjoy the sentiment?

The Christmas tree is such a beautiful tradition and was started in the 1800s. We put it up and decorate it and fill the bottom with gifts. No tree is the same all decorated up.

Every ornament is special and I have one from 1972 when my son was a year old.

Others mean times spent either happy or sad. The ornaments usually mean something.

The Christmas feast is special not because of what is served but who sits at the table. Food is great but the smiles are what make it special. New faces are added and old faces fade away. It is such a wonderful and poignant time in so many ways.

Enjoy your holiday season for what it is and what it represents. It is never the same but incorporate routines and rituals that are special and can be followed throughout the years. The tree topper – what does it mean?

Turning on the lights for the first time that year – why is it so special? See your children open their presents and squeal with excitement. Seeing grandparents celebrate with their grandchildren, the next generation, is so special.

The holiday season – so simple and yet so meaningful.

Brampton Animal Shelter celebrates 12 Days of Christmas

Furry friends throughout the City of Brampton will have more reason to celebrate this holiday season, as a local animal shelter will be hosting a number of initiatives geared at giving back to both animals and the community.

Brampton Animal Shelter is spreading cheer this season with its 12 Days of Christmas event, which runs through Dec. 18.

Residents and their four-legged friends are invited to join the shelter for a number of community events and the opportunity to win cool prizes and visit us for festive activities.

The action kicked off this past weekend with an adoption gift certificate drive and an opportunity for residents to get their pet photos taken with Santa at Dogtopia Brampton.

The excitement continues this week, as the animal shelter kicked off a holiday pet photo contest on their Facebook page.

Residents are invited to submit their best photos with their furry friends for the chance to win a gift basket!

A number of gift initiatives also kick off this week, starting with a donation drive at the Helping Orphaned Pets in Emergencies (HOPE) Fund. Residents who donate to the fund, located in the Brampton Animal Shelter head office at 475 Chrysler Dr., will receive a hand-lettered stocking for their pet or a personalized pet tag.

The Animal Shelter wil also be hosting a number of pet-themed sales throughout the weekend, including a handmade pet crafts sale today (Dec. 12), a handmade ornaments sale tomorrow (Dec. 13) and a pet bake sale on Friday (Dec. 15). All sales will run at the Animal Shelter office during normal business hours, from 10 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Residents are also invited to help the shelter collect Amazon Wish List items this weekend, along with the Adopt a Stuffed Animal drive next Monday (Dec. 17).

A free Microchip Clinic will be hosted for residents who want to get their pets tagged. Participants must pre-register, as space is limited. Interested residents can register for the clinicby calling (905) 458-5800.

All proceeds from the undraisers will be donated to the HOPE Fund.

"Giving back is an important part of the holidays – that includes giving back to our four-legged friends," said Mayor Patrick Brown last week. "Whether or not you have a pet, participating in the 12 Days is a great way to get involved in our community this holiday season."

For more information on any of the events, visit brampton.ca/animalservices.

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My First Canadian Winter Adventure

by **Vidya Gopaul**

I clearly remember when I landed in September 1975 in this beautiful country of ours called Canada, from a very far, year-round average temperature of eighteen degrees Celsius, from my former island, Mauritius.

Mauritius is island surrounded by gorgeous beaches, clear water, beautiful coral reefs, long slender palm trees with luscious coconuts hanging by the dozen, warm temperatures year round and blue skies most of the year.

Mark Twain said it best about Mauritius, "Mauritius was made first, and then heaven; and that heaven was copied after Mauritius."

Before I came to Canada, I did my research on its political, educational and financial systems - and most of all it's climate.

I had to study all those subjects because I had to present myself in an interview to the Canadian Consulate in Mauritius as to why I wanted to come to Canada. I still remember that at the end of that interview the immigration officer mentioned to me that Canada has extreme weather - very hot summers and cold winters with lots of snow.

Before I started my long and adventurous journey to Canada, I packed everything that I thought I needed to survive in that country except winter clothes, which I never thought of taking.

On that September evening when I landed at Toronto International Airport, it was about plus sixteen degrees Celsius. That was the first time I ever felt cold in my life because I wore a very light shirt and a very simple pant.

Luckily, I wore a pair of good shoes and not flip-flops as I had the habit of wearing them back in Mauritius. After clearing immigration, I quickly took a taxi and went to my apartment.

Over the next few days, the temperature went up and therefore the need to buy winter clothes and shoes never occurred in my mind.

Frankly, the idea of getting ready for winter never crossed my mind at all because, first, I didn't know how. Secondly, the temperature was bearable. I carried on my daily routine - that is, going to college everyday.

I made some good friends at school and they all mentioned vaguely at some point about winter clothes. But I ignored them because I was too busy concentrating on my studies.

However, one dear friend purposely gave me a very light jacket of his and said, "Vidya, why don't you take this jacket? I have another one like this at home and I think you will need it very soon."

He knew what he was doing because he knew about the cold weather which was coming in the next few days. I did not know because at that time I had no means of listening to the news. I had no radio or television and I was not buying newspapers because I was saving money for my studies.

A few days went by, and that light jacket that I had was sufficient to protect me from mild cold weather. One day in October, though, the temperature went down quite low. As I have mentioned earlier, I did not have the knowledge of the weather beforehand as I did not listen to the news.

I started to walk along the Danforth Avenue, from Sibley Avenue to Main subway station, to catch the next train to go to my college in the city of Toronto. Back then I was living in East York, Toronto.

As I reached Dawes Road I felt that I could not breathe. I did not know was happening to me. I thought I was dying or something. I then realized that I was too young to die because just before coming to Canada I had done a complete physical examination, including chest. heart and lung x-rays. All my vaccinations were up to date.

At the same time, I also felt that my chest was being squeezed by some force. When I noticed my hands and feet were cold I decided to warm them by taking shelter in a store. I just entered in a store and waited for about fifteen minutes before I started to feel better and my breathing became normal.

At that point, I thought I was feeling better and everything was alright. I started to walk again towards the Main subway station.

After a few blocks, I started to feel the same thing; that is, I was short of breath, felt like my chest was being squeezed and my hands and feet were getting cold very fast.

I did the same thing as before, taking shelter in a store. I waited until I could breathe properly and then started to walk towards the subway station. I continued to do the same thing a few times until I reached the Main subway station. During the forty-five minutes ride on the subway train to my college, I realized that it must have been the cold weather that was giving me those health problems; mainly, I just could not breathe properly. Moreover, I was perfectly alright during that forty-five minutes train ride.

When I reached my college, I told my friend who gave me that light jacket what had happened to me during the trip.

He laughed and said, "My friend Vidya... this is not Mauritius! This is Canada and Canada has very cold weather. This jacket of yours would have been just fine for Mauritian weather but not here. You should buy winter coat and shoes if you want to survive Canadian cold weather. I have been telling you since day one and you just ignored it. Now you see what happened to you. You are lucky the temperature was not negative fifteen degrees Celsius. Otherwise, you could have gotten frostbite and damaged your fingers and toes. In the worst case, a doctor would have to amputate them to save your health."

The moment I heard about amputation, I became terrified. During the next break, my friend and I went to the nearest store and bought my first winter coat and shoes.

After that, I not only started to dress properly for the winter weather, but I started to love Canadian winters so much so that I learned how to skate, ski and enjoy ice-fishing.

To make my winter more enjoyable, I do barbequing on ice too, which very few people do! I toboggan with my grandkids as well!

Up-and-comers take the stage at Celebration Square for New Year's

Some of the country's hottest performers will be descending on Celebration Square on Dec. 31, as Mississauga rings in the New Year with their annual celebrations.

Tens of thousands of fans are expected at the annual event, which kicks off at 8 p.m. with live DJ music performed by Sir Lancelot and DJ Tilt.

A who's who of performers will take the stage beginning at 9 p.m., including Toronto-based hip-hop collective The Sororiety, Juno Award winning rapper k-os, and "The Launch" winners Elijah Woods x Jamie Fine.

The evening will crest at 11 p.m. with a performance by Mississauga-based R&B up-and-comer Anders, who released his debut EP earlier this year.

A massive fireworks display will close out the night - and ring in 2019 - at midnight.

MiWay will also be offering free transit throughout the evening, starting at 7 p.m. on Dec. 31 and continuing through 4 a.m. on Jan. 1.

For more information, visit miway.ca/holiday-service.

Remembrances pour in for heritage leader

Heritage Mississauga announced last week that Jenny Walker, who served with the organization for the last seven years as its program developer, passed away late last month after a short battle with cancer.

"It is with heavy hearts that the staff and board announce the passing of our valued team member," the organization said in a statement Friday afternoon. "Jenny will be greatly missed by a wide array of friends and colleagues."

A long-time volunteer, Walker lent her time and talents to developing heritage components for many community programs, including the Carassauga Canada Pavilion, Italfest, Bollywood Monster Mashup and Doors Open Mississauga, amongst other events.

She was also one of the driving forces behind Heritage Mississauga's signature awards gala, The Credits.

Born in Sunderland General Hospital, North East England to Leonard and Irene Wright (nee Watson) in 1918, Walker was the younger sister to Neal.

She is survived by husband Neil and children James, Liam, and Alexandra. The family moved to Mississauga in 2006 where Jenny completed her history degree at the University of Toronto.

She then worked as the Program Developer with Heritage Mississauga up until her diagnosis. She had recently moved to Dundas, Ontario.

The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Care Foundation.

For more information, visit tinyurl.com/jenny-walker.

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'Twas The Bite Before Christmas Helps the Community

PWN Staff Photos

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